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Dialogue as a Problem Area of Communication between the Authorities and the Public

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The study discusses the role of dialogue communication in the interaction of the state, business, and civil society. The results are aimed at creating favorable conditions for the development of a business climate not only for a single region but also for the entire Russian economy. The study uses methods of system analysis, a sociological expert survey, an in-depth interview, methods for analyzing statistical data, which together revealed the substantive essence of communication barriers in the space of dialogue between the authorities, business and the public. The results of studies are aimed at identifying the role of dialogue communication in the interaction of the state, business, and civil society as an essential element of the socio-economic development of the country's business climate. The research results can be used in practical activities of the authorities to improve the effectiveness of dialogue between the authorities, business structures and civil society in the context of the socio-economic development.

Keywords: Authorities, business, civil society, communication, dialogue, public

The concept of dialogue attracts the complex of means that help to indicate and regulate the moral tension in public relations, the tension that exists at the boundary between client interests and public or audience interests (Pearson, 2016). Since the 1990s, the local level of governance, as well as its whole-state variant, has become increasingly important in addressing the challenge of sustainable development (Wittmayer et al., 2016). There is a need to develop the basic theories and principles involved in the practice of public relations and explore how public relations functions in adapting an organization to its social, political, and economic environment (Nolte, 2016).

In modern Russia, when new economic relations are being formed, and its economy is becoming increasingly integrated into the world community, there is an urgent need for structural changes and closer interaction between the state, business, and civil society. The process of constructing communications between the authorities, business, and society as a whole is currently the decisive factor for the effective development of a regional business climate.

The need to establish a dialogue between civil society and the authorities, as well as business and the authorities are determined by socio-economic problems, since the absence of a public and open discussion of these problems may lead to their aggravation (Kolmakov et al., 2019; Mishchuk et al., 2019). Today, the quality of life of the population

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and the stable development of Russian regions depend on the effectiveness of partnership relations between the authorities, business, and civil society in all areas. It should be emphasized that a constitutional state, business, and civil society are equal and interacting partners, not rivals. Therefore, the effective interaction between them contributes to the harmonious development of a business climate of the country's regions, as well as the sustainable development and improvement of the quality of life of the population.

In this regard, in the process of studying the dialogue between the authorities and civil society, this paper focuses on the interpersonal relations of the participants in the interaction, on how these participants perceive and evaluate each other's behavior in certain contexts, and on how they design their interaction.

Following the theory of communicative action by J. Habermas (1991), the effective communication between the authorities and civil society is possible only in the case of the mutual understanding of the parties and the consistency of their interests, which in turn contribute to social change. Shinyaeva (2014) believes that the process of interaction between the authorities and the public is a dialogue in the sense of an exchange of thoughts and assessments, in the presence of discussions on various issues. Schukina (2016) and Nikovskaya (2017) actualize the topic of identifying a spectrum of diverse formats of dialogical interactions, including the authorities and the public, as well as the role of civil society in shaping civic identity and consolidating Russian society. Against the background of transformation processes taking place in Russia, the process of interaction between the structures of public authority and civil society is in the formative stage. In this regard, it is particularly important to consider the social component of the communicative space used by society and the state.

The purpose of this article is to identify and analyze the features of the process of constructing the communication between the authorities, business, and civil society. The objectives are to explore the main reasons hindering the development of dialogue between the authorities, business community and civil society, and to propose measures to eliminate them to improve the mechanism of state and public partnership. The scientific novelty of this work is determined by the formulation of the problem and the definition of the most significant difficulties in the process of constructing the communication between the authorities, business, and civil society.

Literature Review

The problem of communicative relationships between the authorities, business, and society is constantly in the focus of the attention of many social scientists and practitioners. Public relations practice is situated at precisely that point where competing interests collide. Indeed, public relations problems can be defined in terms of the collision, or potential collision, of these interests. Serving client and public interests simultaneously is the seemingly impossible mission of the public relations practitioner (Pearson, 2016).

Since the current study revolves around dialogue as a means of communication, researches pertaining to this area demands deliberations. Matheny, Poe, Fisher, and Warren (2018) explore that audiences were emotionally attached to the speech. Going to unravel the various perspectives of speech; Kalinina, Yusupova, and Voevoda (2019) claim that speech can be manipulated in the process of communication, especially in dialogues which are politically driven. Such kind of dialogue potentially influence and shape up public opinion. Gellner (1994), Dahrendorf (1998), Clark (1995), Lasswell (2006), Touraine (1992), Shils (1997), Habermas (2016), Payne and Calton (2017), Connell (2007) have

contributed immensely to the development of ideas about the mechanism and constituent elements of social and political communications. Payne and Calton (2017) explore some examples of multi-stakeholder dialogues and the criticisms that have been raised concerning the corporate governance processes. It shows that interactions must be explored and developed to realize a corporate citizenship practice based on reciprocal engagement between managers and stakeholders.

Kedar Uttam and Caroline Le Lann Roos research the problem of dialogue usage in the context of so-called green public procurement. The authors recommend contracting authorities to implement a competitive dialogue procedure solution to identify sustainable public procurement preferences. Dialogue sessions with contractors should involve discussions regarding sustainable public procurement to ensure consistency between the weight for environmental considerations and respective preferences (Uttam & Roos, 2015).

Petra Saskia Bayerl and Lachezar Stoyanov propose another way of dialogue practice used within the framework of cooperation between the public and authorities. The authors are interested in the role digital memes in the form of pictures play in the framing of public discourses about police injustice, and what it is that makes memes successful in this process (Bayerl & Stoyanov, 2016).

Wittmayer, Steenbergen, Rok, and Roorda (2015) pay attention into the importance of dialogue within public communication process and conclude that governing sustainability should be about finding creative ways for opening spaces for participation, change, and experimentation, that is, for creating alternative ideas, practices, and social relations. All this becomes possible while attractive the dialogue functions (Wittmayer et al., 2015). Butenko and Kolesnichenko (1996), Golenkova (2000), Shinyaeva and Kayumova (2014), and Yadova (2004) examined the problems of social policy in the context of the social structure transformation and the interaction of the authorities and the public.

The specificity of the sociological approach to the study of communication is that it allows us to reveal various aspects of social life and the many contradictions in its development through the prism of social interactions. The modern view on the structure of communication, including emerging communication barriers, is most fully represented in the works of Russian researchers T. Z. Adamyants (2005), N. N. Verkhovtseva (2015), M. N. Grachev (2004), N. N. Lamskova (2017), L. I. Mukhamedova (2007), V. V. Silkin (2006), and L.N. Timofeeva (2018).

All the above researchers describe the relationship between the authorities, business, and society from different but synonymous points of view. They describe the main characteristics of the authorities, business, and civil society, and analyze the contradictions between the authorities and business, as well as specific facts and events from various points of view.

Materials and Methods

This sociological study focused on the assessment of communicative factors influencing regional development on the part of the authorities, business, and civil society was based on:

- (i) Annual studies conducted by the all-Russian non-governmental organization of small and medium business "OPORA RUSSIA" (2012-2016);
- (ii) Information and analytical materials of various aspects of the communication process of the authorities and the business community, as well as the authorities and civil society in the activities of the regions;

Besides, this research includes a secondary analysis of the following sociological studies:

- (i) Data from a mass survey, focus groups and expert interviews in St. Petersburg (2017);
- (ii) Questionnaires of SME representatives (Nizhny Novgorod, 2015, N=502);
- (iii) An in-depth interview "Sociological analysis of state support for small businesses in the Belgorod region" (2016, N=20); and
- (iv) An in-depth interview with business leaders and city authorities of the Volga Federal district and the Central Federal district (2016, N=19).

Results

The results of sociological studies of entrepreneurs conducted in the regions of the Russian Federation, "The Business Climate in Russia: the OPORTA Index" (2012-2016) showed the problem of designing a business and government communication process. Despite the existence of laws on the protection of business rights, their activities at the level of practice were directly dependent on bureaucracy and criminality. The post-Soviet period of development of the Russian business was characterized by a number of negative trends: corruption relationships between businessmen and representatives of bureaucratic structures; criminalization of business due to forced contacts with organized criminal groups; priority of informal, non-institutional norms and rules in behavioral and ideological attitudes of a significant number of entrepreneurs (Giallourakis, 2017). Table 1 is the indicative in this respect and the answers of the interviewed entrepreneurs on the topic: "How do the authorities treat business in reality?"

Table 1. How do the authorities treat business in reality? (%)

	Years				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
As a wallet	46	46.3	42.0	48	43.0
As a junior partner	28	27.2	40.3	36.8	28.9
As a driver of economic and social development	18	21	19.9	17.1	21.1
As a breeding ground for corruption	24	17.3	15.9	15.8	16.2
As an equal partner	15	19.1	14.8	12.5	14.1
As a competitor in the struggle for influence in society	14	5.6	5.7	4.6	9.9
As an object of constant support and protection	1	8	7.4	8.6	8.5
As a competitor in the economic sphere	5	1.2	2.8	2.0	4.2

Almost half of the business representatives (43%) replied: "as a wallet." According to 28.9% of the respondents, the authorities see business as a junior partner. 21.1% of the organizations believe that the authorities treat the business as a driver of economic and social development, and 16.2% of the respondents are convinced that the authorities perceive business as a breeding ground for corruption.

Based on the results of a nationwide survey conducted in the framework of the project "On the State of the Business Climate in Russia" (2016), 35% of the companies rate the level of corruption in the country in 2016 as "high," and 21.9% "average;" while 43.1% of the respondents consider the level of corruption "low". About the 2008 assessment of corruption, the share of the answer "high corruption" fell by 22.8%- from 57.8% to 35% through the 2011 intermediate value of 51%. At the same time, the share of the option "corruption at an average level" remains almost unchanged during all the years of the study (approximately 21-23%). If we take into account the short-term dynamics (from 2012 to 2016), we will have to state some "conservation" of the indicators— 44% of the respondents in 2012 and 43.1% in 2016 said that the level of corruption was low (Figure 1).

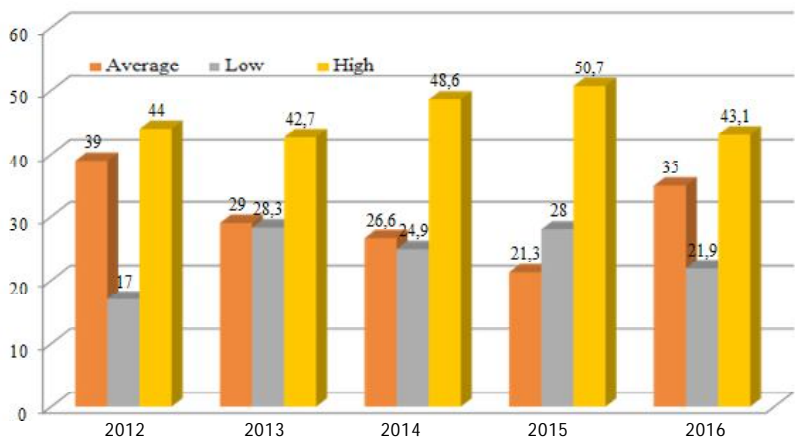


Figure 1. The level of power corruption in the opinion of business representatives (%)

Of particular interest are the results of a survey of entrepreneurs regarding the most corrupt authorities (Figure 2). Law enforcement agencies have been in the first place in this regard for the past five years.

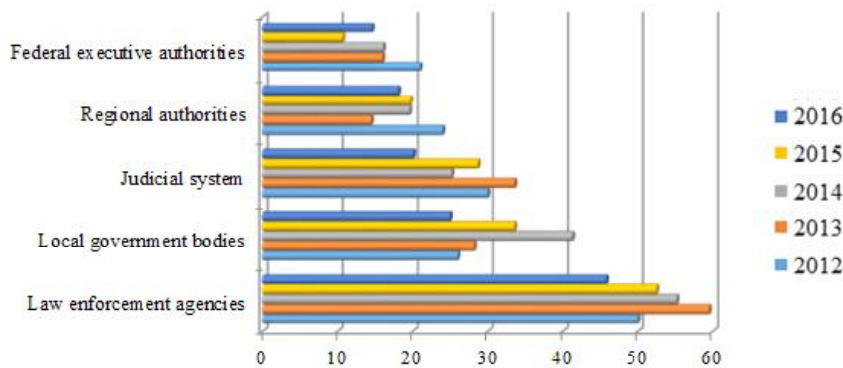


Figure 2. The most corrupt authorities in the opinion of business representatives (%)

Based on the 2014 sociological survey, 91% of the respondents consider personal contact, as well as public and collective interaction, to be the most effective way for small and medium-sized businesses to interact with local government bodies. However, they consider the use of business associations and third-party organizations in the protection of their interests to be unproductive. The third part of the interviewed OPORA heads of small and medium-sized enterprises considers administrative barriers to be “a burden so heavy that it is impossible to adapt to it” (Petrakov & Glebov, 2013).

To complete the analysis of the problems of regulating the business climate, we turn to the expert data on what hinders entrepreneurship most of all. The 2014 expert survey “Sociological analysis of state support for small businesses in the Belgorod region” conducted among the leading specialists of the Belgorod region in the area of state support for small businesses (N=16) and the results of an in-depth interview conducted among the participants of the Belgorod Interregional Forum in 2016 (N=20) showed the following results. It was proposed to evaluate 13 factors on a 7-point scale (1- does not hinder at all, 7- hinders as much as possible). Here follows the ranked number of factors.

Lack of effective legal support	5.0
Arbitrariness of tax authorities	4.9
Unequal conditions of entrepreneurship	4.6
Lack of moral support from society	4.5
Arbitrariness of regulatory agencies	4.5
Mess in the legislation	4.4
Arbitrariness of government representatives	4.0
Lack of effective financial support from the state	4.0
Lack of social responsibility of business	3.9
Insecurity of small business	3.7
Lack of partnerships with the authorities	3.7
Corruption	3.6
Pressure from criminal structures	3.2

The respondents noted the factors that have become the greatest obstacles to the development of entrepreneurship in the Belgorod region. They include the lack of effective legal support, arbitrariness on the part of tax authorities, as well as unequal conditions compared with large and medium-sized businesses. The rating of the negative significance of such factors as "lack of moral support from society," "arbitrariness on the part of regulatory agencies," and "mess in the legislation" is also quite high. Such factors as "arbitrariness of government representatives" and "lack of effective financial support from the state" also hinder the development of small businesses. Based on the data of the sociological survey, there is a lack of "fair competition." Experts point to the vulnerability of small and medium-sized businesses and the lack of partnerships with the authorities.

Currently, Russia is on the threshold of a qualitatively new relationship between business and the authorities. Business is now seeking to design a process of communication with the authorities. Now the goal is to create new forms of communication between business structures and government bodies.

The 2014-2016 research showed that the structure of the regional business space of an SME entrepreneur is significantly biased towards institutional business relations in the communication space, i.e., the modern model of the communication construct of entrepreneurs and government bodies in the Russian Federation is based on existing business associations (Orlova, 2015). In 2016, a survey was conducted in the form of in-depth interviews with heads of enterprises, representatives of business associations and government bodies (19 respondents from the cities of the Volga Federal district and the Central Federal district were interviewed). The state is a regulator that actively regulates business. Today, there is quite a positive trend in general regulation and legislative consolidation of norms. At the regional level, the interaction between the authorities and business is exacerbated by the uneven development of the regions and the different time of formation in the social structure of entrepreneurs, the heterogeneity of the business community as well as its weak institutionalization.

Based on the respondents' answers, the extreme dependence of business on federal and regional authorities was revealed. The character of this dependence, on the one hand, is natural; business cannot be independent, because the state has a regulatory function. On the other hand, the dependence can be excessive and is not always within the framework of regulatory and legal provisions, manifesting itself in the form of corrupt interest including "fighting competitors" with the support of individual officials" (*Respondent N: an entrepreneur, medium business, 7 years' experience*).

As part of the survey, the respondents were asked about favorable or unfavorable conditions for business development in Russia. Their answers demonstrate that the opinion about favorable and unfavorable conditions for doing business in Russia is divided as follows: favorable 29%; unfavorable 48%; I don't know 23%.

Respondent A (an entrepreneur having small business and four years' experience) says, "Depending on the type of business, they may be different, but in general, of course, the problem is to reduce the zone of adverse factors." If we talk about unfavorable conditions, their essence is that today, government bodies have created a very high degree of uncertainty. The business is "in fear" and cannot carry out long-term planning, as there are no clear frameworks, conditions, and laws which would allow it to do so. The process of communication between the authorities and business has not been built.

Respondent R (a representative of the authorities) says, "The conditions for doing business in Russia are becoming more and more attractive every year. The development of state strategy creates prerequisites for industrial development, as well as the introduction of new technologies and the latest achievements of science. The authorities are doing everything possible to create a favorable business environment, which contributes to the positive dynamics of Russia's investment development. But the business community needs to learn how to establish a dialogue with the authorities." The problem is that today, there is a question of compliance with the already established norms and laws.

Respondent B (an entrepreneur having small business and three years of experience) says, "The main issue consists of implementation. The head of state says the right thing, but implementation is very lame. Conceptually everything is correct; they began to adopt new laws. We are talking about the economy, but everything depends on the fundamental things: the corruption system, the judicial system, the bureaucracy. Whatever one may say, you first need to change it. The authorities need to be closer to the people, business, and to be interested in their problems not on paper, but in the process of communication."

An important element in the system of communication between business structures and government bodies are business associations. According to the results of the study, an assessment was made of the scale of participation of entrepreneurs in business associations, and the effectiveness of business associations for establishing a dialogue with government bodies.

Respondent K (an entrepreneur and a representative of the Public Association of Entrepreneurs) gives a concrete example illustrating why enterprises are merging: "Based on common interests, based on the tasks facing businesses, often, the issues that should be solved by the authorities are left unsolved for various reasons, and the business is forced to unite to remind and push to the solution of the necessary issues, and to engage in dialogue with the authorities."

The impressions of entrepreneurs from interactions with government bodies show that there are difficulties, and their tonality is predominantly negative. Three central indicators in the interview materials united the majority of the surveyed employers: "corruption," "bureaucracy," "desire to crush business." Entrepreneurs note frequent inspections, fines, high taxes, problems with customs and police intervention, as well as lack of professionalism of public service workers. Most employers want to adapt and adjust to the situation. There are very few of those who are aware of the possibility of creating contractual, partnership relations in the communication space.

The state should adjust and maintain rational mutual expectations, the integrity and balance of the entire system, as well as build a constructive dialogue with the business community. However, in reality, the situation is quite opposite. SMEs connect almost all their problems with the state, not seeing it as a partner and assistant, unwilling to build a dialogue with business representatives and representatives of civil society. The state, in turn, practically distanced itself from the regulation of social and labor relations in this area, pinning hopes on the direct participants and market regulation. In this regard, both employees and employers lose confidence in government bodies that could help them. This is well illustrated by the example of state employment services, to which neither of them addresses.

Consider the position of SME employees (by the example of Nizhny Novgorod) (questionnaire, 2015, N=502). SME employees are practically excluded from direct contact with the state. In the Nizhny Novgorod survey, the question of employees' appeals to government services was examined. The distribution of their answers is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Personal appeals of SME employees to government services (%)

Government services	Respondents
Pension fund	42
Tax inspectorate	40
I did not have to appeal personally	30
Social insurance fund	25
Employment service	16.5
Migration services	13.5
Court (for resolving labor disputes)	8
Labor inspection	3

The results show that the largest number of the surveyed employees (about 40%) appealed independently to the tax inspectorate, as many, to the pension fund, and a quarter to the social insurance fund. Only 8% appealed to the state court for resolving labor disputes, and 3% went to the labor inspection with complaints about the employer. About a third of the respondents never personally appealed to government services. Thus, generally, employees rarely resort to the help of government bodies to protect their rights (courts and labor inspections), and in a third of cases they do not contact the state at all.

The main reasons for appeals are not directly related to employment, but rather to support outside of it. This is confirmed by the data on the intensity of the impact of government bodies on the working life of SME employees. In the study, it was evaluated based on the respondents' opinions expressed on a 10-point scale (where 1- does not affect and 10- critically affect). The results are shown in Figure 3.

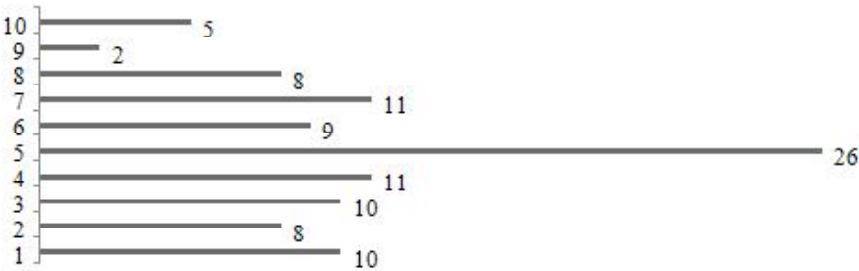


Figure 3. The impact of the state on the working life of the employee (% of the respondents)

Figure 3 show that most of the respondents assess this impact neutrally with a certain downward shift in the direction of its absence. The majority of the employees (65%) defined their ratings in the range from 1 to 5. Accordingly, the cumulative ratio between them can be represented as neutral-negative if it is implemented. In this case, the employees prefer a personal visit or a call (65%), less often the Internet portals of government services are used (20%), and about 10% of the respondents try to use informal ties. In Nizhny Novgorod, SME employees identified the main problems of interaction with government bodies, presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Problems of interaction with government services (%)

Problems of interaction	Respondents
Queues	54
A large number of papers	50
Long-time to consider and make a decision on the problem	38
The indifference of government officials	33
Unclear structure– it is difficult to understand who to contact	31
It is difficult to reach the needed official	23
Corruption	17.5

It is found that infrequent communications are complicated by citizens' poor access to government agencies, as well as the bureaucratization of relations. A third of the respondents noted the difficulties in understanding the communication channels (it is difficult to understand who to contact), which forms a deliberately negative attitude towards possible assistance and participation of the state in this area.

Mutual expectations of employees and the state fit into the pattern of industrial relations, much relates to paternalistic relations that are traditional for the Russians, while the state itself imposes liberal labor relations. Employees expect the state to control employers, and if their rights are violated, to take responsibility for the fate of employees and maintain social guarantees. The interests of the state, on the contrary, lie in the area of law-abiding employees as taxpayers and the desire to stimulate the self-responsibility of employees in the labor market and about employers. Such a difference in the expectations of the parties does not contribute to solving the urgent problems of employment regulation.

In general, all three subjects (employees, employers, and the state) are localized in their needs and expectations, and the communication channels between them are very difficult or blocked. To a greater degree, the development of relations is possible at the level of state interactions with employers subordinate to the need to develop rules and methods for observing the rights of employees. State pressure on employees is carried out indirectly (through the employer) and causes counter-resistance and even solidarity from these parties. The negative-neutral attitude towards the state is expressed in sabotaging the rules and maintaining informal ties in the authorities and regulatory agencies.

Currently, the task of establishing a business partnership and the process of constructing communications, i.e., stable cooperation of small, medium and large businesses with the authorities, is becoming urgent. The principle of partnership requires the formation of a new type of relationship between business entities and the authorities.

An analysis of the findings of the mass survey focus groups, and expert interviews (2017) allows us to determine the overall level of satisfaction with the communication between the authorities and representatives of civil society in St. Petersburg as conditionally "acceptable."

During the mass survey, one of the key themes was the issue of topics and models of interaction between government bodies and civil society actors. Based on this survey, “parallel” and “partnership” models of interaction between the authorities and civil society have become the most common in St. Petersburg.

The respondents’ answers to the question “How can you characterize the relations of public organizations and city authorities in St. Petersburg?” are shown in Figure 4.

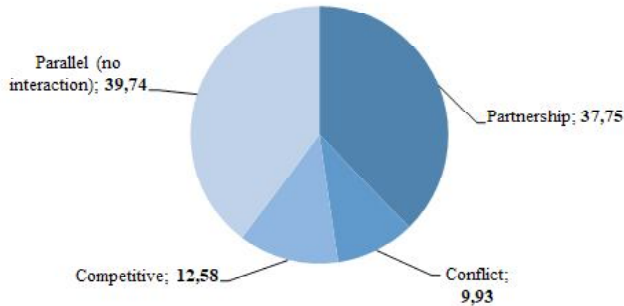


Figure 4. Characteristics of the Relations of Public Organizations and City Authorities (% of respondents)

The results of expert interviews can be analyzed in the same aspect. They characterize the climate for interaction between the authorities and civil society in St. Petersburg as having significant problems, but, nevertheless, fundamentally favorable: “With the advent of new technologies, it can be stated that the authorities have become much more open; however, decisions in many important areas are still being made in private, without public comment”.

Particularly relevant under these conditions is the creation of highly efficient forms of communication between regional government structures and representatives of civil society. It is the highly efficient, open and regular interaction between regional authorities and representatives of civil society that can identify urgent social problems at the early stages, prevent their growth, relieve the symptoms of discontent as well as develop solutions that suit all parties to the greatest extent. In this context, the modern Russian government substantially activates its policy towards closer interaction with civil structures. As shown by the results of the study, both representatives of the authorities and civil society believe that without this, it will hardly be possible to restore communications between the authorities and society, as well as mutual trust between them.

These opportunities are based on using the partnership model of communication in the conditions of open public policy. It is this model that seems optimal and, therefore, most desirable to establish an effective “government-society” dialogue.

Discussion

The study revealed not only a certain dynamics of positive results in the development of communication of government structures with civil society and the business community but also revealed several problems and contradictions in this complex process. In conformity to the identified problems of communication among the authorities, society, and business in the Russian Federation, Afonin and Orlova (2015), Lamskova (2015), and Schukina (2013), in their studies, emphasize the importance of dialogue between the authorities and the public in the context of stabilizing society and receiving systematic

feedback. The authorities have to master new forms and ways of interacting with society, using- although contradictory- the mechanisms of transparency in their activities, without which it is impossible to effectively complete the processes of constructing the communication between the authorities, business, and society as a whole.

The more developed a civil society, the more urgent the topic of establishing a dialogue between the authorities and society. What prevents the creation, establishment, and strengthening of such a dialogue? What should it be at the present stage of development of civil society? All these questions are most fully represented in the works of both foreign (Ellinor, 1998; Hawes, 1999; Isaacs, 1999) and Russian (Nikovskaya & Skalaban, 2017) researchers and clearly reflect the importance of the problem facing civil society and the business community, which cannot be solved without close interaction with government structures.

A full-fledged dialogue of the authorities, business, and society is also needed for the maximum number of citizens to be involved in a conversation, in a discussion of certain issues. The movement towards civil society should be carried out by expanding and deepening the dialogue between society and the authorities. Such a dialogue will provide both the dynamics of the development of the state and the opportunity to find the optimal solution in the interests of the authorities, civil society and business.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the problem of communication among the authorities, business, and civil society, it is advisable to formulate some practical recommendations and make adjustments to the partnership mechanisms, including the creation of a favorable economic and regulatory environment, such as: the development of modern mechanisms and the widespread introduction of dialogue models of communicative interaction.

The widespread use of modern communication channels in teaching citizens dialogue and partnership with the dissemination of programs to actively inform citizens about all planned and implemented tasks, affecting public or private interests.

The development of the concept and the implementation of a system for monitoring the effectiveness of the process of communication between government structures of all levels, civil society and the business community; the improvement of transforming the mechanisms of interaction between the authorities and society in modern Russia, in order to identify the factors of its slowdown and the conditions for improving the effectiveness of the "government-civil society" and "government-business" dialogue.

The expansion of the area of expert-analytical cooperation of the authorities, the business community, and civil structures, the formation of new channels of civic activity, primarily at the regional business level, the modernization of interaction formats based on modern digital technologies.

And finally, the opportunities to improve the regional business space can be successfully realized only in the context of the constant involvement of civil society and the business community in the state-public dialogue.

The proposed recommendations will generally enhance the effectiveness of the process of constructing communications of the authorities, business, and civil society, and can also be applied in the course of organizational improvement and regulatory development of civil society development processes in the Russian Federation, including in the activities of state and municipal authorities.

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